

BOARD OF TRADE PERFINS

Member Burkhard Beer has translated into German all the articles and comments on The Board of Trade Perfins (Forgeries) which have appeared in our Bulletins and these have been published in the German magazine *Forschungsgemeinschaft Grossbritannien*. The following is a translation by Philip Robinson of the reply from Karl Louis FRPSL, BPP, in *Rundbrief/118, December 1999*.

Some observations regarding the article on Board of Trade forgeries in Newsletter 117

Stamps with the official Board of Trade perfin have for many decades been a kind of philatelic "Sleeping Beauty". Perhaps John Nelson, in his interesting article, has applied the necessary "awakening kiss".

Two aspects of these Board of Trade perfins have limited the amount of interest taken in them by collectors for over 70 years. One factor is the unclear "official" status of the perfins. The Kohl handbook of 1930 states **"their actual postal provenance seems not to have been established beyond doubt"**.

It was evidently on this basis that Stanley Gibbons omitted the stamps from their catalogues in the 1920s, and included a note in the 1929 edition, for example, stating "...have been used for official purposes, but we do **not catalogue this class of stamp**".

On the other hand, the controversy over the possible forged nature of these stamps has continued for almost as long as the stamps have existed. Captain H.T.Jackson, FRPSL, claimed to be the discoverer of the forgeries in his article written in 1962(!). He wrote that he "had discovered and classified the first of the forgeries before 1950". In fact the forgeries were not discovered in the 1940s, but much earlier, and the Kohl handbook of 1930 states on Page 833 "one should, however, beware of forgeries, **large**

quantities of which have appeared on the market, especially outside England. Genuine perfins are rare, and fully justify the prices quoted by us".

What collector would, under these conditions, venture to collect Board of Trade perfins? The investigations of a small number of philatelists who study this subject were evidently hindered simply by the fact that covers, by means of which one could establish beyond doubt the genuineness of the perfins on them, were not available for study.

John Nelson also evidently did not have a cover to examine, as his only reference to a cover was that of Graham Fortey, who reported this in a letter published in Bulletin 293.

The small number of covers recorded in the author's card index indeed demonstrates the rarity of covers etc. with Board of Trade perfins. The following usage's on cover can be established.

[Ed:- in the article there are 7 illustrations of covers. I do not think they need to be reproduced here to aid the text. However, if anyone is particularly interested I will send photocopies of these illustrations.]

- [1.] An 1887 Jubilee 2½d cancelled with a London duplex postmark, Nov 89, dated MR 16 92, on an envelope printed "ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE/Board of Trade", sent to "Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, Barcelona".
- [2.] An 1887 Jubilee 2½d with the London 89 duplex postmark, on a printed OHMS envelope to Havre, France.
- [3.] A pair of 1887 Jubilee ½d stamps used together with a 2d on a piece addressed to "Almanac de Gotha" in Gotha, Saxony (Germany).
- [4.] An 1887 Jubilee 3d with a London cds (date illegible) on an official printed cover to Gotha, Saxony (Germany).

[5.] An 1887 Jubilee 9d used with an 1881 Penny Lilac cancelled "F.B." (Foreign Branch) on an official OHMS cover (date illegible) to Gotha, Saxony (Germany).

[6.] 1902 Edward VII 4d and 6d values used together on a printed OHMS cover and cancelled with a London cds. The month and day are unfortunately illegible but the year is 1904. Addressed to "Le Directeur, Departement federal des Affaires Etrangeres, (Division du Commerce), Berne, Switzerland.

Graham Fortey in his letter of April 1998 describes the following cover: 1902 Edward VII 6d (pair) and 2d with a "LONDON E.C. 17 JU 1904" postmark ("hooded circle" type) on a large piece printed with "ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE" and addressed in French to The Department of Affairs, Berne, Switzerland. These seven covers allow the following observations to be made:

1. All the covers were sent abroad.
2. They all originated in London.
3. Three covers have exactly the same London Chief Office duplex cancellation with the number 89. This is all the more surprising as the dates of usage extend over a ten-year period (1888, 1892 and 1898) and all three covers were addressed to different countries.
4. Three of the covers are from correspondence sent to Gotha, though different postmarks are used on them.
5. Two of the covers are from correspondence sent to Berne. The stamps are cancelled with different types of postmarks.

Perhaps these observations could be kept in mind when pursuing further research.

[7.] A piece with six single copies of the 1864 Penny Red, Plate 150, with the Board of Trade perfin.

In the third part of his article John Nelson mentions a number of 1864 line-engraved Penny Reds with the Board of Trade perfin, and London cancellations dated February 1873. I have also recorded stamps of this issue with the perfin.

Six examples of the 1864 Penny Red, Plate 150 with Board of trade perfin exist on piece ([7] above). These are also cancelled with a London duplex mark, this one having the number 87. The year of usage is also clear, being 1872! Unfortunately the day and month are illegible - this is all the more regrettable as Joseph Sloper's patent for the perfin process was in force until 31 August 1872. One could hardly suppose **mat** the Board of Trade would violate a patent.

In June 1997 a single stamp, from Plate 125, was submitted for expertising by the German philatelic federation. This also has a London Chief Office postmark, dated 25 February 1873, and is therefore almost contemporary with John Nelson's example. Are they genuine or not?

Looking at the covers, the postmarks were heavily struck, and yet nowhere did the postmarking ink pass through the perfin holes on to the cover. In every case the white paper of the cover can be seen through the holes! This indicates that the stamps were first soaked off, the perfin was applied to them, and they were then replaced on the piece. However, without seeing the original piece it is not possible to make a conclusive judgement.

An unused Edward VII 10/- stamp with the Board of Trade perfin has also been recorded. This value was not mentioned in the 1930 Kohl handbook. In view of the extreme rarity of the other unique 10/- stamp overprinted IR OFFICIAL, this also outweighs any doubt as to its genuineness.

In conclusion, research should be directed towards finding more examples on cover, from original archives. Examining loose stamps with the Board of Trade perfin cannot be relied upon. The statement by John Nelson that it would be difficult for him "not to come to the conclusion that all Board of Trade perfins might be genuine" may, in view of the shortage of evidence, be difficult to accept.